

I. A THEORETICAL SURVEY OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

A. PRIMARY EGOCENTRIC ATTITUDES

The incidents quoted under this heading illustrate briefly what might perhaps be called the *primary situation* found in a group of very young children. When a number of such young children are brought together in a given space, but left free to play and move about as they wish, they do not at first constitute a *group* in the psychological sense. They behave simply as a number of independent persons, each mainly concerned with his own immediate ends, whether or not these ends cut across or chime in with the pursuits of others. The direct attitude of any given child to any or all of the others may be friendly or hostile ; but even when he is friendly, he will not look upon the other children as ends in themselves, but always as a means to serve or an obstacle to hinder his own particular interests.

This primary situation is related to Piaget's *egocentrism* more closely than any other of the behaviour described in this book. It illustrates this concept in its least equivocal sense, and as actually seen in the spontaneous play of the children with each other.

The extent to which the attitude *dominates* the behaviour of any given child in the group will depend partly upon his age—it is the typical attitude of children under, say, four years; partly upon his previous social experience—many children of five or six may show it if they have not had much to do with other children, or if their temperaments are naturally less adaptable; and partly upon the day and the mood and the particular setting—under the stress of a strong desire or a vividly conceived purpose, any young child may fall into this attitude on occasion.

In itself, it seems to constitute the primary

matrix of social
feeling, out of which all others are developed
by experience
of one sort and another,
Its margin is not well defined. On the far
side, it passes
over into general make-believe play of a more
varied and
developed structure, which in its turn leads to
miming and
drama; and it merges into more developed and
reciprocal
social relationships, with a settled organisation
(as in games and
sports). On the near side, it is not always
distinguishable